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AUTHOR Hufman, Melody
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ABSTRACT

Noting that every business person needs good communication skills, whether managers and employees, superordinates and subordinates, this paper outlines an exercise to teach students to set objectives, develop criteria, analyze perspectives, and implement successful communication strategies. The total time for the exercise is 2 hours and the number of participants suggested is 6-20. The paper describes organizing different size classes, with students being assigned the role of manager, chef, or waiter. It offers a description of the situation and setting for the exercise, including scenarios for each role, and outlines rounds 1-6, each with assigned time limits, steps to follow, and forms to use. The paper also provides a communications effectiveness scoring sheet. The purpose of the exercise is to teach participants to learn to develop strategies to solve conflicts rather than sabotage the efforts of other workers. (CR)

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ED 403 606

MANAGERIAL SOLUTIONS:

AN EXERCISE IN

DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

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by

Melody Hufman Ph.D.
Amber University
1700 Eastgate Blvd.
Garland, Texas 75041

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INTRODUCTION

Every business person needs good communication skills. A manager must develop strategies, negotiate settlements, and solve conflicts. He also must motivate his employees to strive to reach objectives of the organization. Likewise the employees must negotiate favorable treatment, manage organizational conflict, and persuade their superiors to help them reach their personal goals. Before superordinates and subordinates develop these skills, they must establish criteria and develop communication strategies to help them manage the organization. Once the differing points of views are understood, then strategies may be implemented more effectively. Often the parties involved never take the opportunity to determine their own objectives much less the objectives of the others involved. This exercise teaches students to set objectives, develop criteria, analyze perspectives, and implement successful communication strategies.

TOTAL TIME: 2 Hour

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 6-30

1) In groups as small as six, two students would be assigned to the roles of manager, chef, and waiters. These students should collaborate their analysis and strategies.
2) In classes or training groups of 7 to 12, the facilitator may divide the groups into one to three managers, two to three chefs, and four to six employees.
3) If the class contains more than 30 participants, then the facilitator may have several groups solving these problems so that the different subgroups can compare their answers and their results.

THE ROLES

MANAGEMENT

You manage a profitable country club called Walnut Ridge in a large metropolitan area with an upper class clientele. You successfully hired an excellent chef and staff. Excellent food and service keep the club members returning to eat in the club often. You feel fortunate because it is difficult to find quality chefs. Your waiters and waitresses give good service to your customers. You do not want to replace them either. But recently you received a note from your staff of waiters and waitresses indicating that they had several grievances against the chef.

1) He takes food home when it can still be served in the dining room.

2) He discarded a good ice-maker when he decided to order a new one.

These angry employees believe the chefs hurt the profits of the club and their bonuses. The chef's job description allows him to discard when he deems it no longer acceptable to be served. He also decides when large mechanical items need to be replaced. He has not violated his job description and his responsibilities. However, you cannot afford to have the waiting staff disgruntle because they may give poor service. By the same token, good chefs are difficult to find and you certainly do not want to replace this one.

CHEFS

You are happy with your job at Walnut Ridge Country Club. You appreciate the salary, the benefits, and the responsibility given to you by the management. In this position you are allowed autonomy and creativity. Your food brings back customers time after time.

Recently you heard that several waiters complained to the boss about your restaurant management skills. They said that you take home food that should be serviced. You know you

only discard food if you can no longer serve it and maintain the standards of the club. The waiting staff also complained that you took home an ice machine. You hired a man to take that machine to the dump because it no longer made ice. You did not take it home.

You like working for this employer and would rather not leave. However, you know that you can get another job easily although a new position might involve longer hours, fewer benefits, and more direct supervision. However, you do not appreciate the comments made about you because none of the accusations are true.

WAITERS/ WAITRESSES

Although you come from many diverse backgrounds, you all want to make money. Some of you are students who need money for tuition. Some are single mothers who need to support your children. Other are from foreign cultures who are trying to establish themselves in the United States. Some are young people who trying to support themselves for the first time. This job offers the unique opportunity to earn $2.30 cent per hour, tips from expensive meals, and bonuses from the profit sharing plan. Without profit sharing, this job would be just like any other. Certainly other expensive restaurants pay the same wage, but this club offers profit sharing. But recently the bonuses have not been a high as you believe they could be. If management controlled expenses more carefully, each of you would make more money. Specifically the chef wastes money in his management of the restaurant. For example, someone saw him take home food that could be served in the dining room. Also, recently he replaced a perfectly good ice-make with a new one and then hauled off the old ice-maker in a pickup. He knew the man who removed the ice-maker. Collectively you believe that is stealing from the company and hurting the profits of the restaurant. You believe the food he removed could have been served in the dining room. Also, you suspect that he sold the

ice-maker to his friend or had it hauled to his house. You want the manager to eliminate this problem immediately so that all of you make more money.

ROUND ONE Time: 30 minutes

1) Students should be divided into three groups: managers, chefs, waiters/waitresses.

2) Distribute a copy of the roles to each group. All of the information the students need is included in the role descriptions. Encourage students to embellish their roles if they need more information.

3) Distribute a strategy sheet that allows students to evaluate their present and future position. Students should prepare for the next round in which the employees will talk privately with the manager.

STRATEGY SHEET

1) Describe the problem clearly and concisely.

2) From your perspective, describe the best solution to this problem.

3) From your perspective describe an acceptable outcome.

4) From your perspective, describe the worse possible outcome to this conflict.

5) What do you think would happen if you chose to do nothing?

6) What strategy will you use when discussing this problem with your manager/employees?

7) How likely are you to receive a favorable outcome ?

very likely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 not very likely

ROUND 2 TIME: 30 minutes

1) The managers will meet with the chefs and the

waiting staff privately. Each group of participants will explain their goals in light of the strategy that they developed.

2) Then each group will meet privately and discuss the goals and perspectives of the other groups.

Management goals

Chef goals

Waiting staff goals

3) After listing the goals of each group, the member will attempt to develop a solution that will satisfy everyone. They will develop and write a win/win solution.

ROUND THREE

TIME: 20 minutes

All of the groups will meet together and discuss the alternatives to this conflict. One spokesperson will represent each group. All the members will speak in a respectful and orderly manner. The managers will control the meeting.

ROUND FOUR TIME: 10 minutes

1) Based on the discussion, the managers will make their decision. Distribute a copy of these choices to the management group.

MANAGEMENTS' ALTERNATIVES

_____Fire the chef.

_____Fire the waiting staff.

_____Fire all the parties.

_____Implement a new system.

_____Leave the system as it is.

_____Seek employment elsewhere.

_____Make life miserable for the employees until they decide to get along; sabotage their efforts.

2) They will announce their decision to the employees.

ROUND V

TIME: 10 minutes

1) Based on the decision of the managers, the employees will now decide how to proceed. Distribute a copy of these choices to the groups.

ALTERNATIVES EMPLOYEE

_____Accept management's proposal.

_____Reject the proposal and quit.

_____Reject the proposal, but decide to say at the job until another one can be found.

_____Reject the proposal and decide to sabotage the efforts of the other employees.

_____Attempt to renegotiate a satisfactory settlement.

2) Then the employees will announce their decision to management.

ROUND VI--SCORING THE RESULTS

TIME: 10 minutes

When the groups complete the negotiation process, the final decision of each group should be announced to all the groups. Then the score sheets will be distributed to allow student to calculate the communication effectiveness.

COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS

SCORING SHEET

Please circle all the responses that apply and then sum the scores.

1) If every group accepts management's proposal, all three groups gain three points. (+3)

2) If the decision favors your group, your group gains 1 points. (+1)

3) If the decision favors your group and one other group, both groups get two points. (+2)

4) If the decision favors all three groups, then all three groups get 3 points. (+3)

5) If one of the groups leaves the company voluntarily or involuntarily, all the groups lose one point. (-1).

6) If two groups leave, all the groups lose two points.(-2)

7) If three groups leave, all the groups lose three points. (-3)

8) If any group decides to sabotage the efforts of the others, then all the groups lose three points. (-3)

9) If two groups decide to sabotage the efforts of the others, all the groups lose six points. (-6)

10) If all three groups decide to sabotage the efforts of the others, all the groups lose 9 points. (-9)

APPLIES TO CHEFS AND WAITERS ONLY

11) If you attempted to renegotiate management's proposal, then your group gains one point. (+1)

12) If you successfully renegotiate a settlement with management, your group gains 2 points. (+2)

13) If you renegotiate a settlement that is accepted by all three groups, your group gains three points. (+3)

14) If managements proposal favored the other group over your group, your group loses 2 points. (-2)

15) If managements proposal favored your group over the other group, you gain one point. (+1)

APPLIES TO MANAGEMENT ONLY

11) If one group accepted your initial proposal, your group gains one point. (+1)

12) If both groups accepted your initial proposal, your group gains 3 points. (+3)

13) If you attempted to renegotiate a settlement after your decision was challenged, then you gain one point. (+1)

14) If you successfully renegotiated a settlement, that was accepted by one group of employees, your group gains 2 points. (+2)

15) If you successfully renegotiate a settlement that was accepted by both employee group, your group gains three points. (+3)

INTERPRETING THE SCORE

_____If you have a positive score, you have developed adequate communication business skills.

_____If you score is greater than three, you have developed excellent business communication strategies.

_____If you have a negative score, you need to develop your business communication skills.

_____If your score is lower than -3, you could have serious problems in the business world.

ROUND SIX --PROCESSING AND APPLYING THE EXPERIENCE TIME: 30 minutes

1) Each group should evaluate their progress by comparing the results with their initial evaluation. The participants need to determine if they achieved their initial goals.

3) Based on that evaluation, students will determine if their group was successful or unsuccessful and discuss why.

4) Students should list what strategies were effective and ineffective.

5) Students write a letter to themselves discussing how this experience might affect their approaches in conflict in a business setting.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage participants to learn to develop strategies to solve conflicts rather than sabotage the efforts of other workers. In the business world, all the parties involved may accept or reject the proposed solution. Everyone in a company can be adversely affected when communication problems remain unsolved. Students need to learn to develop positive communication climates. Although it is better to leave a company, than to work in a negative communication climate, everyone benefits from good interpersonal relationships. Good communication skills benefit students and workers throughout their lives.